

PLANNING AND ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2003/04

The Planning and Engineering department was reorganized this year into four primary function areas to enhance the services provided to the community, enable staff to better direct and manage development consistent with the Comprehensive Plan of the Town, and to better our ability to be responsive to and increase public awareness of construction activities and progressive community initiatives. This report is organized into these functional areas.

PLANNING

Comprehensive Planning - Comprehensive Plan Amendments

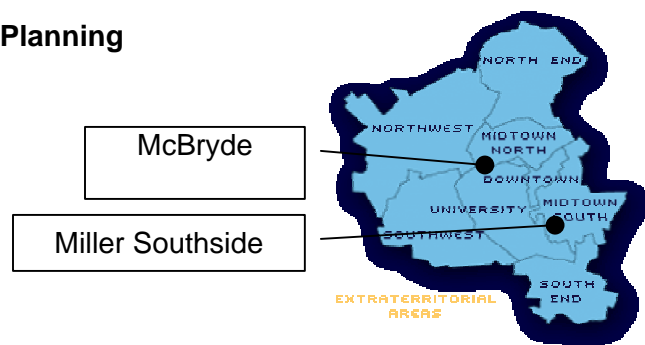
Several major amendments to the Comprehensive Plan were considered this past year. A major revision included a change in the future land use designation of the property directly adjacent to Gables Shopping Center and Margaret Beeks Elementary School and between Country Club Road and Hubbard Street. The amendment changed the future land use designation from "Professional Office" to "Commercial." In addition, a "Public/Private Park Land Designation" was provided between the new "Commercial" area and the adjacent "Low Density Residential." Text was added to encourage master planned and mixed used developments that are designed to fit the character or enhance the area in which they are located.

The Tom's Creek Central Collection Sewer System amendment addressed part of the wastewater system for the Town. This system plan addressed the overburdened sanitary sewer system serving the West Stroubles, McBryde, and University City Boulevard sewersheds. The amendment included a solution by constructing a central collection sewer system through the Tom's Creek Basin. The amendment also included direction on environmental considerations, a proposed route for the system, and the opportunities for a greenway system to be constructed along the sewer path.

Two Greenway master plans were completed by the Community Design Assistance Center for greenways. The Cedar Run Greenway and the Huckleberry Trail Extension are major trails that will add a significant value to the current greenway system. The Cedar Run Greenway will ultimately connect South Main Street and Ellett Road intersection into Montgomery County and to the Ellett Nature Park. The Huckleberry Trail Extension will provide a spur route from the existing trail crossing under Rt. 460-bypass to Heritage Park and ultimately to the National Forest.

There were a number of minor amendments including updates to tables and graphs reflecting population, parkland acreage, sidewalk priorities, map revisions, and other similar updates. The Right-Of-Way Vacation Process was detailed and updated and the FY2004/2005 – 2008/2009 Capital Improvements Program was approved.

Comprehensive Planning - Neighborhood Planning



The Miller Southside Neighborhood Master Plan was begun in August of 2003. Throughout the year a citizen task force of neighborhood representatives developed a draft master plan. Such community participation helps to ensure that the plan expresses the values and vision of the Town and its neighborhoods. The process has raised awareness of planning in the community and laid the groundwork for increased community involvement in the future.

Neighborhood Planning enables citizens to take leadership roles and Town staff to begin the transition from facilitators to resources and educators at neighborhood meetings, special club and organization luncheons and special events. Resident participation varies between neighborhood planning areas.

The McBryde Neighborhood Master Plan was completed and adopted into the Town's Comprehensive Plan in the spring of 2004. The Neighborhood Master Plan provides general policies, and specific strategies for implementing the Town's vision. More than 80 residents participated in the master plan process.

Comprehensive Planning - Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Four Neighborhood Grants were awarded in 2004 to enhance and add amenities to the neighborhoods. The grant projects and neighborhoods this year included improvement of "fall area" around park equipment in the Grissom / Highland area; Haymarket Square playground repair and improvements in the Hethwood area; and Neighborhood entrance landscaping improvements in the Village at Tom's Creek.

Zoning Administration and Current Planning

The Zoning Administration and Current Planning functions have been busy over the past year working closely with citizens, developers, and Town committees, commissions, and Town Council. New and revised development projects range from large master planned community rezonings to many small-scale additions to homes and businesses. Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance changes included regulations for adult businesses, identifying Studio, Fine Arts uses as a Special Use in the Transitional Residential (R-5) District, updating fees, and continuing the Agricultural and Forestal District. Subdivision approvals created 139 new lots. The following table describes the number and type of projects completed over the past year.

Application Type	Number of Projects
District Map Changes	5
Zoning Ordinance Text Changes	3
Subdivision Ordinance Text Changes	1
Special Use Permits	10
Variances	5
Appeals of Zoning Administrator	2
Right of Way Decisions	1
Major Subdivisions	2
Minor Subdivisions	29
Site Plans	33

Included in Zoning Administration's responsibilities is the enforcement of the Town's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. Over the course of the year, multiple violations have been identified through citizen-complaints and staff field inspections. An extra effort is made to inform property owners of the content of the Code and the reasons for the requirements, and to allow a reasonable time for voluntary compliance. The following table summarizes the number of violations cited.

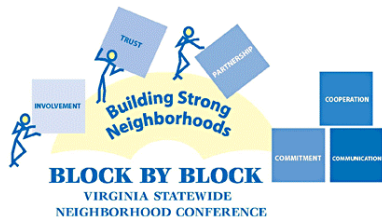
Item	Number
Sign permits issued	83
Zoning compliance inspections completed	74
Zoning violation notification	139
Zoning violations corrected	139

Civic Beautification Awards



This past year there were 21 certificates presented for the Civic Beautification Awards. The awards were for accomplishments in the categories of Classic Beautification, Neighborhood - Block Enhancements, and Historic Preservation.

Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference



conference planning
conference to Blacksburg.

This annual conference provides a great opportunity for citizens from across the state to network together and learn ways to strengthen their neighborhoods. The fifth annual conference was hosted by the Town of Blacksburg on October 8 and 9th, 2004. Town staff provided leadership and support to the committee to bring this

ENGINEERING

Utilities

Several major water system projects were completed this fiscal year. Town engineers managed the design and construction of the Boxwood Drive waterline extension this past year. Additionally, construction began in the spring of 2004 on the new 2 million gallon Highland Park water tank. Staff compiled the Consumer Confidence Report for the water system this year.

The Tom's Creek sewer project engaged engineering staff extensively this past year. Staff supervised completion of the sewer design and submission of the updated preliminary report to the Health Department. Permits required by the county, state and federal governments were obtained, land acquisition began, and ultimately construction documents and construction bidding were completed.

Following sanitary sewer capacity concerns reported two years previously, a more aggressive inflow and infiltration program was launched. Sewer line monitors and a rainfall gage were purchased and installed. With these tools staff is able to analyze data related to overflows and rainfall amounts. With monitoring over the year baseline inflow and infiltration data is being obtained which continues to guide town efforts in correcting sanitary sewer overflows relating to Inflow and infiltration.

Staff negotiated an agreement with the developer of Maple Ridge to replace the 30 year old Murphy Sewer Pump Station on their property, and to fund it jointly. Additionally, the station was designed to reduce the sewer flow impact on the downstream North Main Street sewer shed. An agreement was also facilitated by Town engineers between the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute and William W. Hall to provide sewer to the new Industrial Park area. A consultant was selected and design begun for a new Industrial Park sewer pump station.

Staff reviewed all industrial discharge monthly and quarterly sampling reports for compliance with their permit requirements. Staff mailed grease program requirements twice in this fiscal year to all potential grease generators. Eight violations occurred in this past fiscal year; and staff was able to resolve seven. The final correction is still pending. Staff continued to require backflow devices to be installed and tested. Backflow tests for commercial water customers totaled 767 during this fiscal year. Town staff inspected 217 private water customers as well as tested and installed 39 devices at Town facilities.

Traffic

Neighborhood Traffic Control meetings were held with the following neighborhoods: Miller/Southside, Progress/Bennett Hill, and Fincastle Drive. Their concerns revolved around speeding and cut-through traffic. None of these neighborhoods were able to obtain the required neighborhood consensus determined through mailed survey to implement corrective roadway features. As a result, staff worked with neighborhood contacts, researched other communities' policies, and proposed a revised program outline to Town Council. The Council emphasized their desire to assure the program was available to concerned neighborhoods, and could reasonably result in a neighborhood consensus on corrective measures. Town Council, following several work sessions, adopted the resulting policy. It is soundly based in national engineering warrants with more focus on public input and limiting the size of transportation areas affected by requested roadway changes. Staff will be revisiting each of the three neighborhoods early next year under the revised program outline.

Several intersection improvements took place this fiscal year. The Clay Street traffic signal was designed and constructed under the supervision of the engineering department. Once the signal was installed, staff was able to coordinate the downtown traffic with use of state of the art signal coordination equipment on each signal through the downtown area. The result has been to facilitate the Main Street traffic flow while servicing the side streets enough to avoid long wait times. Signal improvements were completed at the Stanger Street/ Toms Creek Road/Prices Fork Road intersection under a Hazard Mitigation grant. This collaboration project with Virginia Tech and the Virginia Department of Transportation(VDOT) significantly improved the peak hour functioning of the signal and reduced large backups on Stanger Street. Town engineers

also worked with Virginia Tech in the upgrade of the University City Boulevard intersection and traffic signal to offset impacts associated with the Alumni Center entrance addition.

Streets

Staff completed a comprehensive street maintenance update comparing our current VDOT reimbursement to the actual road miles maintained in town. This comparison allowed staff to identify an additional \$50,000 of annual funding due to the Town from the State for road maintenance.

Engineering staff participated on the Lee Street Affordable Housing Grant project through design and support of utility coordination, sidewalk installation, road paving, and storm drainage improvements. Town engineers oversaw the design and construction on the South Main Street Medians and downtown improvements.

The Clay Street road extension project was completed this fiscal year. Staff worked to complete sidewalk, retaining wall, storm drainage, and paving issues. Five bridge inspections were completed by engineering staff last year identifying necessary routine maintenance and repairs.

At the end of the fiscal year, staff began inspecting street lights monthly for outages and timely repair by the electric companies. Four petitions for new street lighting were initiated by residents, although none of these petitions obtained the required 75% support of adjacent property owners.

Storm water

Staff coordinated the final design for the Wong Park storm water management ponds this period. These ponds are two in a series of ponds throughout the Stroubles Creek drainage shed which will mitigate flooding in the downtown area. Engineering design for this project included design of downstream storm drain improvements along Progress Street. Construction began on the ponds at the end of the fiscal year.

Development

A development inspection fee was proposed by staff and adopted by the Town Council. Under this program developers pay fees based on their project construction duration to support the cost of public improvement and erosion and sediment control inspections. These fees enable the Town to hire resources to perform the inspections, based upon development activity at any point in time. Meetings were held with developers, owners, and contractors of private development projects for input on this program, and to explain the proposed process after adoption.

Staff reviewed, approved, and inspected the following large private development projects this fiscal year: Maple Ridge, Coal Bank Ridge, Village at Tom's Creek, Trillium Subdivision, Knollwood, and The Orchards. Each one of these involved storm water management issues, traffic issues, and utility issues. In addition, engineering staff assisted in the review of 83 development permit applications.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM/ TOWN MAPPING

Blacksburg's Geographic Information System (GIS) is applied in many ways. During the past year the system was instrumental in the success of the Blacksburg Housing and Community Development Office's application for entitlement funds based on Blacksburg's 2003 Department of Housing and Urban Development designation as a Low to Moderate Income Entitlement jurisdiction. The GIS Division also developed a Rescue Squad application that promotes statistical analysis of call routing, volume, and geospatial distribution. This information is being used to project future needs for the rescue squad in meeting the increasing demand for services based on population growth.

The GIS Division has worked extensively with Montgomery County and the Town of Christiansburg to standardize primary layers within our respective Geographic Information Systems. The main focus for regional GIS coordination is to enhance our ability to support Phase II Compliance mandated by the Federal Government for Wireless 911. Phase II compliance requires the use of GIS in the dispatch of emergency services. If a wireless customer is using a phase II compliant cellular phone, the geographic coordinates are transmitted by the nearest cellular tower to the dispatch office responsible for that location. The GIS automatically locates the caller. Benefits of Phase II compliance are immense including reduction of response times and the increase in safety of responding personnel. The system also works with traditional phones as well.

The aerial imagery from the Virginia's Base Map Program can now be viewed and printed from the Town's Web-based Geographic Information System, <http://arcims2.webgis.net/blacksburg/>. Hard copy printouts can be purchased from the GIS Division. The public can also purchase the digital imagery from the Virginia Geographic Information Network (VGIN), <http://www.vgin.vipnet.org/>.

RENTAL PERMITTING AND INSPECTIONS PROGRAM

The rental permit and inspection program was expanded into the Bennett-Hill Progress Neighborhood. The number of rental units included in the Town's rental inspection program increased with the addition of the Bennet Hill/Progress area. There is still one full time Property Maintenance Official performing the inspections. The Property Maintenance Official joined the Building Inspection Division this past year to assist in code enforcement and to provide better customer service to all citizen's by consolidating all building code enforcement services.

The most common property maintenance code violations this past year were smoke detectors not working, missing backflow/expansion tanks, which protect the Town's water system, illegal locks on doors and exterior painting and missing addresses.

Staff was very active in the negotiation of state legislation governing rental inspection programs statewide. In addition, as a result, the Building Official and Property Maintenance Official were founding participants in a continuing property maintenance code working committee of the Virginia Building Code Officials Association.

Also, this past year, proactive enforcement of property maintenance increased on structures not included within the rental inspection program. This effort included the demolition of an abandoned structure which had become unsafe.

Total Number of Properties Registered in Rental Permitting Program	712
Total number of property maintenance inspection visits (re-inspections, proactive inspections and complaint based inspections)	713
Total number of dwelling units which passed inspections	340
Average number of inspections per month	40
Property Maintenance Inspections not related to Rental Inspection Program	103

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION INSPECTIONS PROGRAM

Building construction activity increased in Town this past year indicated by an increase in the number of building permits issued, the value of the building construction, and the number of inspections performed. Larger projects included Kent Square, a commercial/office/residential complex downtown with a 400 space parking garage; two (2) new buildings in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, nine (9) new restaurants; and several new town home/subdivision developments.

Also, this past year Virginia adopted a new Building Code. The 2000 I-Codes were adopted which brought a lot of changes to the construction industry. The Building Official conducted several code meetings to train the local contractors on the changes, helping to facilitate a smooth transition for both inspectors and the contractors in applying the new codes during construction.

Total number of permits issued	871
Total number of demolished buildings	15
Total number of inspections	4039
Total number of new dwelling units	149
Total number of Permanent Certificates of Occupancies issued	110
Total number of Temporary Certificates of Occupancies issued	34
Total amount of fees collected	\$ 524,603
Total value of Construction	\$ 56,324,996
Total number of permits issued	871
Total number of demolished buildings	15
Total amount for Stop Work orders issued	\$ 1,500
Total amount for Re-inspections fees	\$ 1,470